

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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NIC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3934

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 14332

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: FPOR, UR, XF

SUBJ: SOVIET ATTITUDE ON ME STABILIZATION

ARRANGEMENT

1. SUMMARY. SOVIETS CLEARLY ARE NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT HAVING OCCUPIED A BACK SEAT WHILE U.S. TOOK INITIATIVE IN STABILIZING CEASE-FIRE. WHILE THEY PROBABLY WOULD NOT TRY DIRECTLY TO UNDERMINE THE ARRANGEMENT, THEY MIGHT NOT BE UNHAPPY IF HITCHES DEVELOPED WHICH REQUIRED THEIR INTERCESSION. FROM THE SOVIET VIEWPOINT, AN IMPORTANT CRITERION OF THEIR SUCCESS IN MIDDLE EAST WILL BE THE EXTENT OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN ESTABLISHMENT OF "APPROPRIATE AUSPICES" FOR NEGOTIATIONS. IF MOSCOW IS FROZEN OUT, BREZHNEV MAY HAVE TO STRAIN TO JUSTIFY HIS JUGGLING OF DETENTE AND MIDDLE EAST FACTORS. THE SOVIETS PROBABLY WILL NOW BE PULLING UP THEIR SOCKS AND TRYING TO GET BACK INTO THE GAME. WHETHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WILL CAUSE THEM

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TO TRY TO PLAY MORE POSITIVE ROLE, OR WHETHER THEY WILL

TRY SPOILING TACTICS, MAY BECOME APPARENT FROM THEIR DEALINGS WITH THE PALESTINIANS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. SOVIET TREATMENT OF THE U.S. DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE IN THE ME DURING THE LAST TWO WEEKS SUGGESTS THAT U.S. SOLO SUCCESSES HAVE PROVED UNPALATABLE FOR THE BREZHNEV LEADERSHIP. HAVING COPEDED WITH THE HEAD-ON SITUATION OCTOBER 24-25 AND MADE A CASE THAT DETENTE HAD PROVED ITSELF WITHOUT DAMAGING THE USSR'S ME ROLE, THE LEADERSHIP NOW SEEMS LESS CLEAR ON THE BEST TACTICS. THE PRESS HAS GIVEN MARGINAL TREATMENT TO U.S. TALKS WITH ME PRINCIPALS, TO THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI CEASE-FIRE STABILIZATION AGREEMENT, AND TO THE U.S.-EGYPTIAN DECISION TO RESUME DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. BREZHNEV MADE NO REFERENCE TO THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT IN HIS SPEECH AT KIEV NOVEMBER 12. IT WAS ALSO ABSENT FROM THE BREZHNEV-TITO COMMUNIQUE NOV 16 AND FROM KOSYGIN'S NOV 15 LUNCH SPEECH IN HONOR OF THE GUINEAN PRIME MINISTER. THESE SIGNS SUGGEST THAT THE SOVIETS ARE ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF RECENT EVENTS ON THEIR ME POSITION, ARE ASKING THEMSELVES WHETHER THE U.S. HAS MOVED AWAY FROM ACCEPTANCE OF A SOVIET ME ROLE, AND ARE CONSIDERING WHAT THEY CAN DO TO ADVANCE THE POLITICAL ROLE WHICH SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 338 SEEMED TO HAVE GIVEN THEM.

3. THERE SEEMS AMPLE CURRENT EVIDENCE TO INDICATE THAT MOSCOW'S DESIRE TO PLAY A MAJOR POLITICAL ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAS NOT DIMINISHED. THE SOVIETS' COMPROMISE ON UNTSO PARTICIPATION, THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE UNEF LIFT OF FINNISH TROOPS (HOWEVER INEPT), AND THEIR OVERALL EAGERNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN PEACEKEEPING ARRANGEMENTS ALL ATTEST TO THAT. WE ASSUME THEY WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK DEEPER INVOLVEMENT IN SETTLEMENT EFFORTS, A SOVIET APPROACH GEARED TO KEEPING THE POLITICAL PROCESS MOVING HAS THE ADDED ATTRACTION OF PRESERVING THE FRAMEWORK OF DETENTE.

4. OUR GUESS IS THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD REJECT SUCH AN APPROACH ONLY RELUCTANTLY AND ONLY IF THEY WERE CONFIDENTIAL

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CLEARLY BEING FROZEN OUT OF THE COMING POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS. (RECENT DEVELOPMENTS MAY, IN FACT, HAVE CREATED AN HEALTHY DEGREE OF CONCERN ON THEIR PART, WHICH MIGHT ENCOURAGE THEM TO GREATER EFFORTS TO MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION.) WHILE MOSCOW PROBABLY WOULD NOT TRY ACTIVELY TO UNDERMINE THE CEASE-FIRE ARRANGEMENT, IT WOULD PROBABLY BE HAPPY IF HITCHES DEVELOPED REQUIRING ITS INTERCESSION.

IF THE SOVIETS DECIDED THAT SPOILING TACTICS WERE
CALLED FOR, THEY COULD SEEK FOR EXAMPLE, TO MANIPULATE THE
PALESTINIANS. BUT SPOILING TACTICS COULD BE RISKY AND
WOULD NOT NECESSARILY ADVANCE THE SOVIET GOAL
OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE "APPROPRIATE AUSPICES" FOR NEGOTIATIONS AND THUS OF FULL-FLEDGED SOVIET OFFICIAL PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS OF THE AREA.
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